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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVES ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR GUELPH AREA

Funding Will Create Emergency Mental Health Services at Guelph General Hospital

GUELPH – The McGuinty government is investing $3.15 million to provide emergency psychiatric assessments for mentally ill adult patients who come to Guelph General Hospital's Emergency Department, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Patients with mental illnesses have special needs when they arrive for emergency care," said Smitherman. "With local health care partners working together to establish Emergency Mental Health Services at the hospital, we're working to ensure these patients are appropriately identified and receive the type of care they require."

The funding announced today includes:

- $2.15 million capital grant to establish the Emergency Mental Health Services (EMHS), which will be operated by Guelph General Hospital in partnership with Homewood Health Centre and the Community Mental Health Clinic
- $1.0 million operating funding to provide 24 hours a day, 7 days a week emergency psychiatric assessments for mentally ill adult patients.

EMHS is being created in response to one of the recommendations from an external mental health review initiated by Guelph General Hospital. The project will provide an appropriate safe care environment in the Emergency Department for patients with a mental disorder.

Currently, Guelph General Hospital does not have mental health programming, emergency psychiatric assessment or treatment capacity, while Homewood Health Centre does not have an emergency department, and the beds are often full. This partnership, along with the Community Mental Health Clinic, will establish fully functional emergency services for patients with mental illness in Guelph and Wellington communities.

The project is scheduled to be completed in 2008.

"I'm pleased that the government is supporting the delivery of Emergency Mental Health Services in our community. This will make a real difference in the care that's provided to our patients with mental illness," said Richard Ernst, President and CEO of Guelph General Hospital. "The funding will help on multiple levels, including improving patient flow through our Emergency Department."

"This initiative recognizes that patients with mental illnesses need specialized care," said Liz Sandals, MPP for Guelph-Wellington. "By entrenching this type of care as part of emergency services, patients will have access to the care to meet their needs."

The government has also recently announced other initiatives to improve access to mental health services, which include:

- Providing a $4.3 million grant for the Guelph, Wellington and Dufferin Community Mental Health Clinic (CMHC) to expand services, benefit more than 400 additional clients each year and create a consolidated, central site for the organization.
- Investing $68.5 million to improve access to community-based mental health services for 22,910 more Ontarians this year.
- Providing a total of $41 million in capital funding to hospitals to repair and upgrade their facilities.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses

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